Rept. No.: **03007**
Date: January 21, 2003

SPECIAL STATUS PLANT SURVEY WAIVER

Project name: Crooked River Gap Fencing

Anticipated impacts: Existing gap fences will be repaired and new gap fences constructed in the canyons of both the North and South Fork Crooked Rivers. In the North Fork, this amounts to 14 new sections totaling approximately 2.5 miles. Along the South Fork, this includes 2 new sections (0.6 miles) and the repair of 2 existing sections (0.6 miles). As these projects are located within wilderness study areas, construction would occur with a minimal amount of soil and vegetation disturbance. Short-term effects would be expected to be minor to negligible and might include trampling of soil and/or vegetation. Long-term effects may result in some livestock trailing along the gap fences although this would be expected to be minor. Improvement of the riparian vegetation along the rivers would also be expected in the long term. The purpose of these fences is to control unauthorized livestock use in the river canyon, thereby allowing recovery of the native riparian species.

Descriptive location: The North Fork of the Crooked River is located along the south flank of the Ochoco Mountains, approximately 30 miles east of Prineville, while the South Fork Crooked River is located south and west of Paulina, within the Twelvemile Table area.

Legal Description: The North Fork area is located in townships 15 and 16 south and ranges 21 and 22 east. The South Fork is in townships 18 and 19 south and ranges 22 and 23 east.

Environment as described by project initiator or from other information: Both project areas are characterized by rocky, basalt tablelands with a deeply-incised river canyon. In the North Fork area, the upland vegetation is dominated by stiff and low sagebrush with varying amounts of western juniper and ponderosa pine in the overstory. Similar species exist in the South Fork although there is no ponderosa pine. Riparian species are common and include assorted sedges, rushes and grasses.

Special status plants which would be suspected of occurring in the project area, their habitat and known locations: No special status plants are known or would be suspected in the South Fork project area. However, three species are known to exist in the general North Fork project area: *Achnatherum hendersonii*, *Calochortus longebarbatus* var. *peckii* and *Lomatium ochocense*.

Achnatherum hendersonii (Henderson's ricegrass) is a perennial member of the grass family considered by the Natural Heritage Data Base to be threatened or endangered in Oregon but more common elsewhere. As such it is regarded as "Bureau Sensitive". It is found sporadically in central and northeastern Oregon on rocky, "scab" ridges, often in association with Sandberg bluegrass, stiff sagebrush and buckwheats. Specific locations include the Trout Creek drainage north of the Ochoco National Forest, near Shaniko and in the North Fork Crooked River area. As a bunchgrass, it is susceptible to grazing practices which would not allow for rest from grazing during the critical growing season, approximately May through July, depending on the site. Other threats include the invasion of exotic species, OHV traffic and road construction. A closely related species, *Achnatherum wallowensis*, is found on the north slope of the Ochoco Mountains and may be suspected in similar habitat as *A. hendersonii*.

Calochortus longebarbatus var. *peckii* (Peck's long-bearded mariposa lily) is a Bureau Sensitive species which is found in vernally moist, low gradient draws and streambeds, and in broad meadow basins where it is situated between the wettest parts of the meadow and the forested edge. Sterile, it reproduces by bulblets that form at the base of the plant and by bulbils that form in the lower flower axils. Winter and spring moisture levels determine the amount of flowering during a given year, recognizing that a large percentage of the population resides in the below-ground bulb bank. Fire suppression may have allowed encroachment of trees and shrubs onto its meadow/meadow edge habitat. The species is sensitive to spring/early summer burning but appears to tolerate low intensity fall

burning. Early season livestock grazing is also detrimental. In the Prineville District, this plant is found in the Ochoco Mountains in Crook, Wheeler and Harney counties, and is known from Big Summit Prairie and some of the drainages south of the Ochoco National Forest, including the Maury Mountains.

Lomatium ochocense sp.nov. (Ochoco biscuitroot) is a member of the carrot family and is endemic to an area on the south flank of the Ochoco Mountains, in Crook County. Recently described but not yet published, it is apparently restricted to five locations on rocky, scabland ridges, associated with stiff sagebrush, Sandberg bluegrass and Henderson's ricegrass, along with other members of the *Lomatium* genus, particularly *L. cous*. It is considered by the Natural Heritage Data Base to be threatened or endangered throughout its range and therefore is Bureau Sensitive. Since its name has not yet been published, it has no official state status.

A review of the project maps indicates that none of the gap fences are proposed within known habitat of any of these species. Additionally, given the topography and likely vegetation at each of these proposed fence locations, it is unlikely that they are within potential habitat for any of these species.

Results of other botanical inventories in the general area: No botanical inventory has occurred in the areas specific to the project, i.e., the exact locations of the proposed fence. Inventories have been limited to the uplands in both areas and have resulted in the species information listed above.

For the following reasons, I have determined that there will be no impact to special status plants and have waived the need for a field clearance:

- The proposed project is unlikely to have no more than minimal impact to the existing vegetation,
- The exact locations of the fence segments, as planned, do not appear to be within or adjacent to known populations of special status plants, and
- The habitat at the fence segment locations is not likely to be habitat for special status plants.

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